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ABSTRACT

In Child Development Associate (CDA) training programs, training must be individualized according to the level of the new trainee, and include supervised field experience and academic-theoretical background. Objectives of the program are to help trainees develop the following competencies for working with young children: (1) To learn how to set up and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment, (2) To advance physical and intellectual competence, (3) To build positive self concept and individual strength, (4) To organize and sustain the positive functioning of children and adults in a group in a learning environment, (5) To bring about optimal coordination of home and center child-rearing practices and expectations, and (6) To carry out supplementary responsibilities related to the children's programs. Guidelines concerning length of training, acceptable places of training, acceptable sponsors of trainees, and eligibility-application requirements are presented. Evaluation will be handled by a Consortium, which will work cooperatively with training programs to insure a unified system for preparing CDA's. (DP)

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GUIDELINES

FOR

CDA TRAINING PROGRAMS

I. Overview to the CDA Project

These guidelines are intended to encourage innovative approaches to the preparation of early childhood personnel, working with children of age 3 to 6 years. It is expected that the Child Development Associate will be a competent professional person who is knowledgeable about pre-school children and can provide valuable experiences for them. The CDA will be capable of taking responsibility for the daily activities of a group of young children in Day Care, Head Start, private nursery schools and other pre-school programs.

Underlying the CDA training guidelines is the assumption that the best way to prepare people for work with young children is to provide a combination of field work and theoretical preparation. This combination must be provided in such a way as to help trainees to integrate the learning which can come from both kinds of experiences.

Field experiences interwoven with early childhood education principles and practices form the structure around which CDA competency-based training is to be built.

Training must be directed toward achieving the competencies defined for the Child Development Associate (See pp. 4 - 9). The competencies deal specifically and exclusively with the knowledge and skills of the staff member in charge of a group of children whose activities are organized for developmental and educational purposes. They do not include the responsibilities that must be carried by other qualified staff members in order to provide a high quality, comprehensive, developmental service for the children and their families.

A Consortium, composed of national organizations whose main concern is quality education for young children, will assess and credential CDA candidates. Training programs and the Consortium will work cooperatively to insure that training and assessment are part of a unified system for the preparation and credentialing of CDAs. During the first year it is especially important to establish a helping relationship between training institutions and the Consortium in order to develop effective training and assessment procedures.

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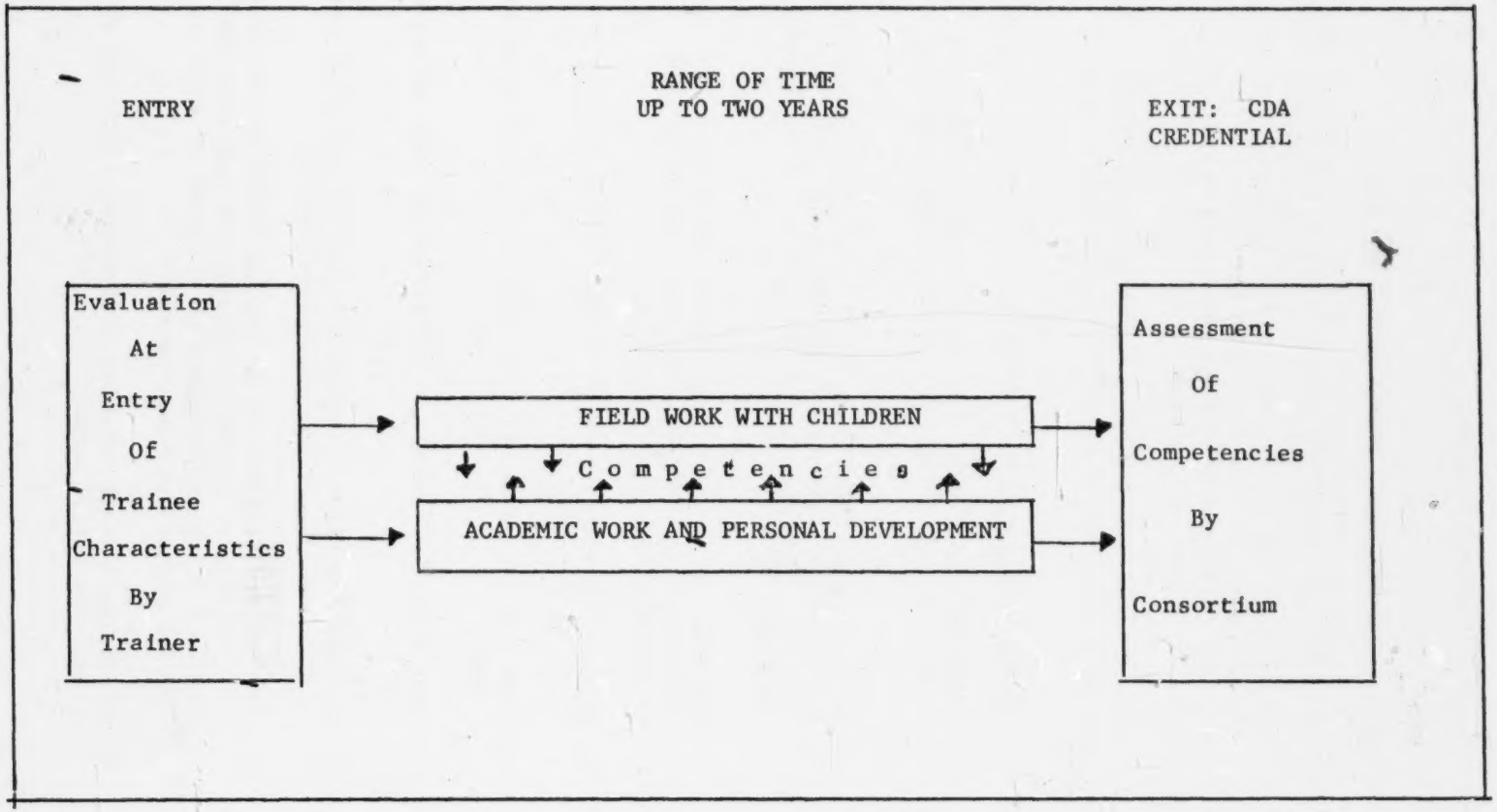
Although training programs are separate from and independent of the Consortium, it is expected that both trainers and the Consortium will work cooperatively to facilitate acceptance of the Child Development Associate as a qualified professional in the field. The success of the CDA program depends upon mutual acceptance by the Consortium and training programs of each others roles and efforts.



C D A T R A I N I N G D I A G R A M

II. Competencies for the Child Development Associate

A comprehensive, developmental program for preschool children is one in which the total design helps children acquire the basic competencies and skills for full development and social participation, while at the same time assuring that the quality of the child's experience is emotionally satisfying and personally meaningful.

Within such a child development program the Child Development Associate will be expected to have the knowledge and skills to be able to:

A. Set up and maintain a safe and healthy learning environment

1. Organize space into functional areas recognizable by the children, e.g., block building, library, dramatic play, etc.

2. Maintain a planned arrangement for furniture, equipment and materials, and for large and small motor skills learning, and for play materials that is understandable to the children.

3. Organize the classroom so that it is possible for the children to be appropriately responsible for care of belongings and materials.

4. Arrange the setting to allow for active movement as well as quiet engagement.

5. Take preventive measures against hazards to physical safety.

6. Keep light, air and heat conditions at best possible levels.

7. Establish a planned sequence of active and quiet periods, of balanced indoor and outdoor activities.

8. Provide for flexibility of planned arrangements of space and schedule to adjust to special circumstances and needs of a particular group of children or make use of special educational opportunities.

9. Recognize unusual behavior or symptoms which may indicate a need for health care.

B. Advance physical and intellectual competence

1. Use the kind of materials, activities and experiences that encourage exploring, experimenting, questioning, that help children fulfill curiosity, gain mastery, and progress toward higher levels of achievement.

2. Recognize and provide for the young child's basic impulses to explore the physical environment; master the problems that require skillful body coordination.

3. Increase knowledge of things in their world by stimulating observation and providing for manipulative-constructive activities.

4. Use a variety of techniques for advancing language comprehension and usage in an atmosphere that encourages free verbal communication among children and between children and adults.

5. Work gradually toward recognition of the symbols for designating words and numbers.

6. Promote cognitive power by stimulating children to organize their experience (as it occurs incidentally or pre-planned for them) in terms of relationships and conceptual dimensions: classes of objects; similarities and differences; comparative size, amount, degree; orientation in time and space; growth and decay; origins; family kinship, causality.

7. Provide varied opportunities for children's active participation, independent choices, experimentation and problem-solving within the context of a structured, organized setting and program.

8. Balance unstructured materials such as paint, clay, blocks with structured materials that require specific procedures and skills; balance the use of techniques that invite exploration and independent discovery with techniques that demonstrate and instruct.

9. Stimulate focused activities: observing, attending, initiating, carrying through, raising questions, searching answers and solutions for the real problems that are encountered and reviewing the outcomes of experience.

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10. Support expressive activities by providing a variety of creative art media, and allowing children freedom to symbolize in their own terms without imposition of standards of realistic representation.

11. Utilize, support and develop the play impulse, in its various symbolic and dramatic forms, as an essential component of the program; giving time, space, necessary materials and guidance in accord with its importance for deepening and clarifying thought and feeling in early childhood.

12. Extend children's knowledge, through direct and vicarious experience, of how things work, of what animals and plants need to live, of basic work processes necessary for everyday living.

13. Acquaint children with the people who keep things functioning in their immediate environment.

C. Build positive self-concept and individual strength

1. Provide an environment of acceptance in which the child can grow toward a sense of positive identity as a boy/girl as a member of his family and ethnic group, as a competent individual with a place in the child community.

2. Give direct, realistic affirmation to the child's advancing skills, growing initiative and responsibility, increasing capacity for adaptation, and emerging interest in cooperation, in terms of the child's actual behavior.

3. Demonstrate acceptance to the child by including his home language functionally in the group setting and helping him to use it as a bridge to another language for the sake of extended communication.

4. Deal with individual differences in children's style and pace of learning and in the social-emotional aspects of their life situations by adjusting the teacher-child relationship to individual needs, by using a variety of teaching methods and by maintaining flexible, progressive expectations.

5. Recognize when behavior reflects emotional conflicts around trust, possession, separation, rivalry, etc., and adapt the program of experiences, teacher-child and child-child relationships so as both to give support and to enlarge the capacity to face these problems realistically.

6. Be able to assess special needs of individual children and call in specialist help where necessary.

7. Keep a balance for the individual child between tasks and experiences from which he can enjoy feelings of mastery and success and those other tasks and experiences which are a suitable and stimulating challenge to him, yet not likely to lead to discouraging failure

8. Assess levels of accomplishment for the individual child against the background of norms of attainment for a developmental stage, taking into careful consideration his individual strengths and weaknesses and considering opportunities he has or has not had for learning and development.

D. <u>Organize and sustain the positive functioning of children and adults in a group in a learning environment</u>

1. Plan the program of activities for the children to include opportunities for playing and working together and sharing experiences and responsibilities with adults in a spirit of enjoyment as well as for the sake of social development.

2. Create an atmosphere through example and attitude where it is natural and acceptable to express feelings, both positive and negative -- love, sympathy, enthusiasm, pain, frustration, loneliness or anger.

3. Establish a reasonable system of limits, rules and regulations to be understood, honored and protected by both children and adults, appropriate to the stage of development.

4. Foster acceptance and appreciation of cultural variety by children and adults as an enrichment of personal experience; develop projects that utilize cultural variation in the family population as resource for the educational program.

E. Bring about optimal coordination of home and center child-rearing practices and expectations

1. Incorporate important elements of the cultural backgrounds of the families being served, food, language, music, holidays, etc., into the children's program in order to offer them continuity between home and center settings at this early stage of development.

2. Establish relationships with parents that facilitate the free flow of information about their children's lives inside and outside the center.

3. Communicate and interact with parents toward the goal of understanding and considering the priorities of their values for their children.

4. Perceive each child as a member of his particular family and work with his family to resolve disagreements between the family's life style with children and the center's handling of child behavior and images of good education.

5. Recognize and utilize the strengths and talents of parents as they may contribute to the development of their own children and give parents every possible opportunity to participate and enrich the group program.

F. Carry out supplementary responsibilities related to the children's programs

1. Make observations on the growth and development of individual children and changes in group behavior, formally or informally, verbally or in writing, and share this information with other staff involved in the program.

2. Engage with other staff in cooperative planning activities such as schedule or program changes indicated as necessary to meet particular needs of a given group of children or incorporation of new knowledge or techniques as these become available in the general field of early childhood education.

3. Be aware of management functions such as ordering of supplies and equipment, scheduling of staff time (helpers, volunteers, parent participants),

monitoring food and transportation services, safeguarding health and safety and transmit needs for efficient functioning to the responsible staff member or consultant.

In addition to the knowledge and experience that are essential components of "educational competencies" it is essential that the people who teach young children shall have specific capacities for relating to them effectively. From field observation of practitioners and a review of the literature, it is possible to name those qualities and capacities which are likely to be most congruent with the competencies as defined. These are essential complements to the more technical aspects of competence. The capacities listed below represent patterns of relatedness most relevant to teaching children in the early years of childhood.

-To be sensitive to children's feelings and the qualities of young thinking

-To be ready to listen to children in order to understand their meanings

-To utilize non-verbal forms and to adapt adult verbal language and style in order to maximize communication with the children

-To be able to protect orderliness without sacrificing spontaneity and child-like exuberance

-To be differently perceptive of individuality and make positive use of individual differences within the child group.

-To be able to exercise control without being threatening

-To be emotionally responsive, taking pleasure in children's successes, and being supportive for their troubles and failures

-To bring humor and imaginativeness into the group situation

-To feel committed to maximizing the child's and his family's strengths and potentials

III. OBJECTIVE OF CDA TRAINING

The acquisition of the competencies constitutes the overall goal of the CDA training programs. The overall goal can, in turn, be stated more specifically in terms of the groups of objectives defined below:

A. Acquisition of the CDA Role. This objective is directed toward helping the trainees to develop positive concepts of their own work roles, interrelationships with other roletakers such as parents, directors, medical and social workers and other staff members, community groups, and to examine the expectations held for them by others.

B. Development of Teaching Style. This objective is directed toward helping the trainees to understand and refine their own interpersonal styles in relating to children, parents, colleagues and others.

C. Acquisition of Teaching Techniques. This objective is to involve the acquisition of specific techniques and skills in working with children in classrooms and other group settings.

D. Socialization into the Profession. This objective is to help the trainee acquire a broad background in the field of early childhood education and the social issues associated with programs for young children; helping the trainees begin to acquire a professional self-image, commitment to the field and a sense of involvement in professional groups and activities.

IV. COMPONENTS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

The main purpose of a CDA training program is to design a learning sequence which coordinates and integrates field, academic, and community experiences to effectively train individuals for the acquisition of the CDA competencies. The total training program should clearly emphasize the vital importance of the development of the preschool child. Field and academic work should occur concurrently to enable trainees to internalize a sense of discovery and inquiry about the teaching role.

A. Field Experiences. Field experiences constitute on-the-job training. The trainee is expected to be a responsible member of a staff team in a preschool setting. Field experiences should be offered in a variety of early childhood settings. It is essential that the field situation:

1. Is a good example of a developmental program in which the trainee has genuine responsibility.

2. Provide good models of adults functioning with children who are also qualified to act as supporting supervisors for the trainee.

3. Provide a mechanism for objective review and analysis of the educational and psychological events, problems and issues that are part of the field experience.

4. Provide a system for increasing the trainee's potential for constructing a positive teacher style.

B. Academic Experiences. Academic experiences relate to and further define the practices of the trainees' field experiences. Theory must clarify field work with children. Content of academic experiences must include:

1. Child growth, development, and health:

   a. Knowledge of cognitive social and emotional stages of development in preschool children.

   b. Knowledge of physical growth and changes in preschool children.

   c. Methods for developing the trainee's capacity to recognize a child's capabilities and potential.

   d. Methods and techniques which help the trainee learn to take advantage of situations which will enhance the intellectual, emotional, physical, and social growth of the child.

   e. Methods which highlight and demonstrate the interrelatedness of all aspects of growth and development.

2. History, principles and practices in early childhood education:

   a. Developing an understanding of the role of the early childhood educator.

   b. Developing a historical and current perspective on early childhood curricula.

3. Relevant ethnic studies to broaden trainee's understanding of the cultural heritage, local resources, and the needs in the community.

4. Techniques to implement and assess early chilhood programs.

C. Community Experiences. Community experiences are activities which acquaint trainees with local community resources which will be useful in developing and implementing early childhood programs and curricula. Trainees must learn techniques which will orient them to any community in which they may work.

V. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

Training must be a coordinated set of field and academic experiences designed to help the trainees acquire the desired competencies.

Training programs may differ from one another, but all training must demonstrate the following characteristics:

A. Programming must be individualized, to meet the trainee's entry level of experiences with young children and his/her academic background.

B. Supervised field experineces which constitute at least 50 percent of trainee's total training time.

1. Major field placements should occur in group care settings for children 3 - 6 year of age.

2. It is suggested that field experiences take place in settings of various age groups with the 3-6 year age range, so that knowledge about various developmental periods can be acquired.

3. It is suggested that field experiences take place in settings similar to those in which the CDA is likely to work after training is completed.

4. Field experiences must provide the trainee with the opportunity to:

   a. Interact with young children as a member of a staff team.

   b. Participate in and assist classroom staff in designing and implementing early childhood curricula.

   c. Interact with parents.

   d. Learn from a supportive supervisory relationship with the main classroom staff member(s).

5. Theoretical work related to and integrated with trainee's field experience.

C. Training components which include an initial entry assessment, a supervisory system, and personal and professional counseling.

1. Initial entry assessment of each CDA candidate to determine his/her level or experience with young children and academic training vis-a-vis the CDA competencies.

2. A system in which trainers and advisors sensitively and carefully observe and evaluate the trainee's performance in the classroom. The trainer and/or advisor should:

a. Coordinate all aspects of training experiences

b. Provide on-site training support to the trainee to help integrate trainee's working and academic experiences.

c. Cooperate with the on-site staff supervising the trainee's work experience.

d. Plan formal and informal experiences which contribute to the trainee's total preparation.

VI. TIME FRAME FOR TRAINING

CDA training will vary in length of time depending on trainee's ability to master and demonstrate the CDA competencies:

A. Variables of Training Time

1. Trainee's existing competencies acquired through previous experience by working with children;

2. Trainee's knowledge of early childhood education and child development;

3. Trainee's attitude toward and understanding of young children;

4. Trainee's aptitude to acquire skills and competency.

B. Duration of Training Time

1. The range of training time will vary with a maximum time of approximatey two years.

2. Length of training will be cooperatively determined by the trainer and the trainee. Final assessment for credentialing will be conducted by the CDA Consortium.

VII. TRAINING CENTERS FOR FIELD EXPERIENCE

CDA trainees may acquire their field experience in a variety of centers.

A. Early Childhood Education Programs which include:

Early childhood education programs for preschool children which provide adequate facilities and programs to provide the necessary learning and training environment required by CDA training guidelines.

B. Training Institutions which include:

Laboratory schools connected with and/or separated by universities, colleges, community colleges, high schools or vocational schools, which provide the necessary learning and training environment required by CDA training guidelines.

VIII. TRAINING CENTERS FOR ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Academic experiences may occur in a variety of settings as long as academic and field experiences are integrated to promote the acquisition of the CDA competencies. Academic and field experiences may occur in the same settings.

A. Settings for academic experience:

1. Child Care Centers

2. Various training institutions, e.g., colleges, junior colleges, and other educational centers.

3. Mobile training units which travel to concentrated areas of CDA candidates.

B. Suggested Methods to Implement Academic Programs:

1. Discussion groups

2. Seminars
3. Field visits
4. Curricula workshops
5. Formal course work
6. Scheduled visits to experimental programs
7. Structured classroom observation and child study
8. Trainee peer group interaction in informal settings
9. Independent projects
10. Individual reading and research

IX. GRANTEES FOR TRAINING PROGRAMS

Training can be sponsored and/or delivered by a variety of institutions or groups of individuals as long as they meet the standards set forth in these guidelines. Suggested settings for training are:

A. Regional Training Offices or State Training Offices
B. Head Start Centers
C. Human resources commissions
D. Established day care and nursery schools
E. Department of State social services which supervise and license children
F. Neighborhood and community organizations
G. High schools
H. Private organizations (profit or nonprofit)
I. Mental health institutions and/or clinics
J. Other preschool settings
K. Vocational technical schools

L. Groups organized for the advancement of ethnic groups

M. High school adult education programs

N. Extension services of colleges

O. Community and Junior colleges

P. Colleges and universities

X. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The following eligibility requirements must be fulfilled in order to meet the standards set forth in these training guidelines.

A. The training center must reflect a non-discriminatory policy vis-a-vis race, ethnicity and sex in accordance with HEW policy.

B. The training program must meet the local needs of the area which it serves:

1. Training should be structured to meet the individual cultural, linguistic, academic, and experiential needs of its trainees and the community.

2. The training program should present a justification of manpower needs for CDAs and availability of job placements.

3. The physical accessibility of the training facility (ies) for CDA candidates must be demonstrated.

4. The training program must demonstrate that it can be easily replicated in other locations. Technical assistance for developing replication techniques may be requested.

XI. EVALUATION

Training programs must establish an evaluation system of CDA trainees and the training program. Although final assessment of each trainee will be provided by the Consortium, each training program should include:

A. Evaluation of individual CDA trainees' mastery of the CDA competencies.

1. Initial and ongoing evaluation during training by:

a. Grantee

b. Self-evaluation of trainees

2. Assessment by the Consortium for the CDA credential.

B. Evaluation of the training program

1. Program self-evaluation by the grantee to include:

a. Program reports required by the Office of Child Development (OCD) quarterly.

b. Yearly assessment of program's strengths and weaknesses.

c. Plan for program change and developments.

2. Evaluation of the training program by national and regional OCD.

3. Evaluation of the training program by the trainees.

XII. COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING PLAN

Applicant must submit a comprehensive plan for the implementation of CDA training. This plan, based on CDA training guidelines, will include the following categories:

A. Staff

1. Staff-trainee ratio.

2. Staff background and composition: (Personnel vitas should accompany proposal).

a. Early childhood education and training experience.

b. Administrative and management capabilities.

3. Methods of staff recruitment and selection.

4. Staff evaluation methods.

5. Staff plan for observing each trainee in the field, e.g. every two weeks.

B. Trainee Recruitment and Selection

1. The Trainees.

a. Minimum age of 17, or a high school graduate.

Exception: Candidates who enter high school training programs may be under 17.

b. Must meet local health requirements for working with young children.

2. The Grantee should select trainees who reflect the ethnic and racial population of the preschool children they are expected to serve.

C. Establishment of Course Credit for CDA Training

1. College-based training programs must submit a description of how CDA training relates to existing college credit programs or plans for modifying college credit procedures.

2. Other grantees must submit a plan for how they will work toward establishing credit from local colleges or universities.

D. Supportive Services

1. Plan of how grantee will establish working relationships with:

a. Liaison community agencies to gain acceptance of CDA and encouragement of employment opportunities.

b. Human service agencies such as psychological or health services to supplement the training program.

c. Community resources available to supplement curriculum and training components.

2. Plan for providing stipends, scholarships, released time or other support for trainees when obtainable.

E. Supplemental Funding

1. Plan for utilizing supplemental funding from other sources whenever available. If other funds are not available, OCD will provide 100 per cent federal funding.

F. Ongoing Training

1. Training institutions now involved in experimental development of competency-based training should indicate how they propose to redirect such training to reflect the CDA competencies.

G. Institutional Cooperation

1. Training institutions are encouraged to work out cooperative arrangements with other institutions (e.g. a community college with a local Head Start program) and submit a joint proposal.

2. Training institutions which see their role primarily as the development and testing of materials and providing technical assistance should indicate what group will actually carry out the training.

XIII. LOCAL CDA ADVISORY BOARD

Training programs are encouraged to establish a board which represents community groups being served by local early childhood programs. The project director of the training program may take the lead in instituting the local advisory board. It is recommended that Advisory Boards include parents of preschool children and CDA trainees. If existing advisory boards are utilized, they could play a valuable role in helping to develop and review the CDA training plan. The suggested role of the Advisory Board would be to review the overall training program and suggest improvements.